

NOVEMBER 2024

# inspiration

M A G A Z I N E

grateful

Why Change  
Water to Wine?

Unshackled

Trusting the  
God of Covenant



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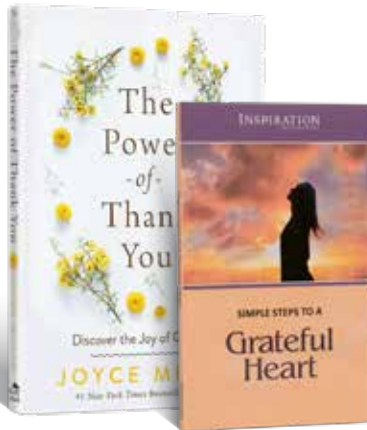


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## GRATEFUL!



As we celebrate Thanksgiving this month, we should remember the power of thankfulness and praise to dramatically transform us and set us free. See David Cerullo's article "Your Praise Breaks Chains" on **page 5**.



Turn to **page 28** for details about our **THANK YOU GIFTS**.

Act quickly—supplies are limited.

## EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

As you dive into this special Thanksgiving issue of *INSPIRATION MAGAZINE*, I want to remind you that your life can be transformed today. How? By focusing your eyes on Jesus and all He has done for you, you can be more than a conqueror in whatever situations you face (Romans 8:37)!

Think how your day would be impacted if,

when you awaken each morning, you would choose to say, "Lord, thank You for this day. Thank You for the blessing and privilege of belonging to You and serving You." **Remember, in an atmosphere of faith and thankfulness, God's breakthroughs happen!** Together, let's give Him thanks with grateful hearts—today and every day. God bless you.

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## What to Do While You're Waiting

November 25–November 28

Dive into the Word with this powerful series by Kim Crabill. With her passion to equip believers to live with purpose, Kim brings fresh hope to those waiting for God's glory.

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## Your Praise BREAKS CHAINS!



**STRENGTHEN**  
*your walk*

Giving thanks to God can be the very thing that brings your breakthrough.

In the physical realm, earthquakes can be pretty frightening. It's disconcerting to feel the ground move under your feet. But God sometimes uses earthquakes to set His people free.

If you want to break loose from a negative situation in your life, you may need to start an earthquake to break your chains off. I don't mean an earthquake that shakes the ground and causes the natural realm to tremble, but rather a shaking of the *spiritual* realm—demolishing satanic strongholds that are hindering God's blessings in your finances, health, or family.

This is the kind of earthquake Paul and Silas touched off in a Philippian jail in Acts 16:22–34 (NKJV). As they gave thanks and worshiped the Lord, “there was a

*great earthquake*” that shook the prison and set the inmates free from their chains.

Even though Paul and Silas had been brutally beaten and mistreated, they prayed...gave thanks... and sang God's praises. And the Lord responded with an earthquake to totally transform their circumstances!

What a fantastic picture of the overwhelming VICTORY God wants to give you and me as we worship and obey Him today. He can unleash a tidal wave of blessings to reverse every negative situation!

And don't miss this important fact in Acts 16:25...

**Paul and Silas received their breakthrough “at midnight.”**

## God proved Himself faithful in their darkest hour!

Friend, this is such good news. No matter what kind of difficult situation you may be facing today, your extraordinary breakthrough may be closer than you think.

### GRATITUDE IN ADVANCE

Throughout the Bible, we see examples of God's people using *thanksgiving* and *praise* as powerful keys to overcome the enemy. In the face of impossible circumstances, God stepped in to answer His people's prayers and gave them *victory* when they gave Him *praise*.

And although it's easy to thank the Lord *after* we've received the victory, these stories teach an entirely different lesson:

#### We must give God praise *before* we see the actual victory.

Just as God broke the chains of bondage in that jail in Philippi, He wants to break *your* chains today. As you draw near and worship Him with a thankful heart, you can be released from...

- Poverty or debt
- Sickness or depression
- Loneliness or hopelessness
- Addiction or family strife

And so much more!

Throughout my years of ministry, I've seen countless people **SET FREE** from toxic situations holding them back in their life. Some have found liberty from an enemy stronghold. Others have supernaturally received some kind of **open door** from the Lord—in a relationship, career, or ministry.

**As Paul and Silas worshiped the Lord, "all the DOORS were opened" (v. 26).**

Regardless of your situation, take a minute right now to thank the Lord. Thank Him for the victory you need...for the doors you need opened...for the answers to the prayers you've been praying. ***Most of all, thank Him for His faithfulness!***

In 2 Chronicles 20, God's people were facing an impossible situation. Three different armies were coming to destroy them, and they were greatly outnumbered. Defeat seemed certain.

Yet something incredible happened when they began to sing and praise the Lord.

In the face of an overwhelming problem, and before they saw the victory they so desperately needed, they began to thank God for the victory. As a result, God stepped in and scattered their enemies!

In the same way, God wants to bless YOU, my friend. As you enter into His presence with thanksgiving and praise, you are positioning yourself for victory. Not only will your praise lift you UP and OUT of the troubles of this world, but it will also place you in the realm of God's Spirit...where the impossible becomes *possible!*

What a wonderful experience and privilege it is to step out of our earthly cares and into the incredible presence and provision of Almighty God!

### SPIRITUAL SHOCKWAVES

Just as earthquakes and tsunamis are powerful physical occurrences, so your praise and worship can also set off potent *spiritual* shockwaves to transform your life. Have you ever noticed that those who maintain an attitude of gratitude tend to attract more blessings and favor while those who grumble and complain attract even more distress?

This shouldn't be surprising since Paul

**In the face of an overwhelming problem, and before they saw the victory they so desperately needed, they began to thank God for the victory.**

wrote to the Philippian church that instead of being anxious, they should make their requests known to God *“with THANKSGIVING”* (Philippians 4:6 NKJV). And he told the Thessalonians: *“In EVERYTHING give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18 NKJV).

You may have waited for a long time, but your breakthrough can come *“suddenly”* just as it did for Paul and Silas. Even when it seems like your *“midnight”* hour has come, God will turn around your circumstances when you give Him praise (Acts 16:25–26 NKJV)!

This story also provides good news if you are concerned about your lost loved ones. Acts 16 says Paul and Silas started an earthquake that brought salvation not only to their jailer but to *“ALL his family”* (v. 33). So go ahead and boldly claim this beautiful principle: *God wants your entire family to experience His salvation and victory!*

But remember, you don't have to wait until you SEE the victory before you start giving God praise. Paul and Silas began to worship the Lord *before* their circumstances changed. Their worship came *first*, and THEN the breakthrough came.

My friend, when you cultivate a heart of thanksgiving, you will increasingly see the Lord intervene in your circumstances and give you victory. You may have waited

for a long time, but your breakthrough can come suddenly, just as it did for Paul and Silas.

Even when it seems like you're in your midnight hour, God will turn your circumstances around when you trust and worship Him today!

### THANKFUL FOR YOU

This Thanksgiving season, I want you to know how grateful we are to God for YOU, our faithful partners. We're deeply aware that none of the souls saved, bodies healed, families reunited, or financial breakthroughs experienced through Inspiration Ministries would be possible without your partnership.

Just as Paul told his partners in Philippi, God will credit the amazing impact of this ministry to YOUR account in Heaven (Philippians 4:17). *Thank you!*



P.S. Turn to **page 28** to see the powerful THANK YOU GIFTS we want to send you this month in gratitude for your partnership.



*“One generation will praise  
Your works to another!”*  
—Psalm 145:4 NASB

# WHAT LEGACY Will You Leave for God?

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# Why Did Jesus Change Water to Wine?

God takes away our hearts of stone and gives us new hearts, filled with His love, joy, and peace.

A miracle is an extraordinary event inexplicable by natural or scientific laws and considered a work of a divine agency. I love a good miracle story. Nothing gets me more pumped than reading a Bible story or hearing a testimony about God showing up and showing off!

Miracles are moments when the power of Heaven pierces earth.

Miracles are the fingerprints of God on the pages of history.

Miracles reveal who is in charge and the “divine agency” of the One who truly calls the shots.

Miracles provide evidence that there is another dimension beyond what we see with our eyes.

Jesus stepped into human history to redeem us from sin and to restore our fellowship with God the Father. As Randy Alcorn

rightly observes, “Jesus’ miracles provide us with a sample of the meaning of redemption: a freeing of creation from the shackles of sin and evil and a reinstatement of creaturely living as intended by God.” He came announcing the arrival of the Kingdom of God and that access to it was available through faith in Him.

Now it’s one thing for Jesus to announce the Kingdom, but quite another thing for Him to reveal it (see Luke 17:21). Pastor Tim Keller explains how Christ’s supernatural acts reveal His Kingdom and pointed toward a return to Eden:

Jesus has come to redeem where it is wrong and heal the world where it is broken. His miracles are not just proofs that He has power, but also wonderful foretastes of what

He is going to do with that power. Jesus’ miracles are... a promise to our hearts.

Whether it was giving sight to a blind man, walking on water, multiplying food to feed thousands, healing a leper, or raising the dead—His miracles were supernatural acts that signified His identity and mission.

The first miracle occurred at a wedding in Cana (see John 2). The details are sparse, but during biblical times, Jewish weddings were a big deal. At some point in this particular wedding feast, the groom’s family ran out of wine, which would have brought tremendous shame upon them. The text infers that she [Mary the mother of Jesus] wanted Him to solve the social blunder.

Jesus responded by saying, “*My time has not come*” (John 2:4 NLT). Jesus grasped the prophetic significance of performing a miracle. He knew the minute He revealed His glory that the national spotlight would turn on Him and bring Israel’s messianic hopes with it.

Here’s the question we must ask

ourselves: Of all the thousands of miracles that John witnessed Jesus perform, why did he share this one? Each of the miracles in John’s Gospel is a sign that validates Jesus’ identity. But this specific miracle powerfully visualized the new covenant.

This miracle symbolizes the transformation that occurs in the human heart. Under the old covenant, the water jars were used for purification rituals, during which the people continually washed their hands and eating utensils in an attempt to achieve purity. But as we’ve seen, cleaning the outside didn’t change the nature of the human heart. The human heart needs a miracle—a touch of grace!

In Christ, we are transformed. God takes away our hearts of stone and gives us new hearts filled with His love, joy, and peace.

The Bible begins with a wedding in the Garden of Eden and concludes with a wedding at the end of Revelation. How fitting then that Jesus, the One sent from Heaven to earth as our Redeemer, launched His public ministry with a miraculous sign at a wedding. ❖



**Marian Jordan Ellis** is a Bible teacher, evangelist, and the founder of Redeemed Girl Ministries.

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**Don't miss Gracie B's  
Christmas special,  
available Thanksgiving weekend!**

# UNSHACKLED

You don't have to remain enslaved to the enemy!



Ben Cerullo

Perhaps you've heard the story of a pony named Pearl who worked with the carnival. Shackled to a pole from a young age, she gave rides to children along a small, circular path.

Every day was the same. Pearl lived in sheer drudgery, going around and around in endless circles without even the slightest taste of freedom.

Far in the distance, Pearl sometimes saw other horses frolicking joyfully in the meadow. *What a great life that must be!* she moaned, feeling sorry for herself as she continued her circular journey.

But one night a miracle happened. During a thunderstorm, a flash of lightning struck the heavy cable Pearl was tethered to, snapping it in half.

However, for a long time Pearl didn't appreciate her good fortune. Although she no longer was shackled, she continued living just as she had done her entire life—plodding along in never-ending circles.

***"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."***

**—John 8:36 ESV**

## DISCOVERING YOUR FREEDOM

Countless believers today are still living much like Pearl the pony. Satan has kept them chained so long to poverty, sickness, addiction, fear, or depression that they don't think it's possible to escape the well-worn path before them. And while they sometimes glimpse others experiencing the abundant life Jesus promised, they're convinced they'll never enjoy such a life.

Yet, if you can relate to Pearl's hapless story, I have good news for you, my friend. Just as a miracle had set the worn-out pony free from her captivity, the miracle of Jesus' death and resurrection has done the same for you and me. The problem comes when, just like Pearl, we don't *recognize* and *accept* the freedom won for us on the cross.

Do you see how tragic this is? On the cross, Jesus defeated not only our sin, but also our poverty, sickness, addiction, fear, and depression. Our shackles have been broken in two—but sometimes we continue plodding through life as if the cross and resurrection had never occurred.

## DEFEATING THE ENEMY'S LIES

Although Satan wants you to *think* you're still tethered helplessly to your problems, nothing could be further from the truth. If

you've received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, your chains are broken. You don't have to keep walking in circles, because you're now *"free indeed"* (John 8:36 ESV).

Even if you've endured years of misery, you can get unshackled in a moment's time when you realize the powerful deliverance available through the blood of Jesus. You may still be taunted by *"the father of lies"* (John 8:44 ESV), but everything changes when you recognize he no longer has any rights in your life.

Just as with Pearl the pony, it may take you some time to begin seeing yourself in a new way. But through applying God's Word to your life each day, you can increasingly become *"transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (Romans 12:2 NKJV).

In Jesus' name, you have power over the devil, but he's not going to give up without a fight. You must claim the authority God has given you to sever your chains and get unshackled from your negative circumstances.

I'm praying for God to awaken the mighty warrior inside of you, giving you courage to pull down strongholds in your own life and then go to battle on behalf of your loved ones. Exercise your rights as a child of the King, and don't stop until you've taken back everything the enemy has stolen from you! ❖



# From Flatline to Favor

Karen's son was brought from death to life  
by the incredible power of prayer.

Karen, an Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partner from California, had been concerned about her son Greg for a long time. She had been sowing financial seeds into God's Kingdom on his behalf, asking God to deliver him from alcoholism and congestive heart failure. One night, things seemed to go from bad to worse when Greg had an apparent heart attack.

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Karen was told there was no way Greg could make it through the night.

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The EMTs rushed to Greg's side, but he was unresponsive. They decided there was no point trying to revive him any longer. He had already been unconscious for more than 30 minutes.

At the last moment, one of the EMTs said, "I feel a faint pulse!" So they rushed Greg to the hospital, and Karen followed in her car. But the emergency room doctor told Karen there was no way Greg would make it through the night.

At 2 p.m. the following day, two doctors, a chaplain, a social worker, a nurse, and a nun all came into the waiting room to tell Karen that Greg had flatlined again for more than 30 minutes. They strongly recommended taking him off life support, saying he surely would have no brain function after his heart had stopped twice for more than 30 minutes each time.

Sadly, Karen agreed. She and some loved ones reluctantly went into his room to say their good-byes.

"We all looked at Greg and

wept," Karen describes the scene. "His face was swollen, purple, gray, and black."

But before leaving her son's hospital room, Karen said, "I want to rub Greg's feet before we go. He always loved that during his other hospital stays."

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We reluctantly went to  
say our good-byes.

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As Karen rubbed his feet and prayed, a strong sense of faith enveloped her. She stood up, cupped her hand on his cheek, and said, "Greg, it's Mom!"

To everyone's shock, God did a miracle. "Immediately, Greg opened his eyes, sat up, and began to pull all the tubing from his body!" Karen exclaims. "We quickly called in the nurses to restrain him."

All three nurses later told Karen they each had more than 20 years' experience in the ICU, but they had never seen anything so astounding!

"The EMTs and emergency room doctor had to come in and see for themselves what had happened," Karen says. "They stood in disbelief as they looked at him."

God's favor had taken Greg from flatlining to a whole new beginning. Soon the Lord was restoring him to full health. Although his heart and kidneys had all shut down, they now are normal. And miraculously, his mind and memory are as sharp as ever.

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I believe this  
was a miracle!

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"I believe this was a miracle, and I praise God daily for His goodness in sparing Greg's life," Karen says.

And she attributes some of God's favor in her life to her partnership with Inspiration Ministries. "God bless your ministry. Your prayers and encouragement have been a great blessing!" ❖

If you need a breakthrough—whether for yourself or a loved one—the prayer ministers in our International Prayer Center would love to pray with you today!

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## Your Choice

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOSHUA 24

Andrew Thomson stood in the pulpit of St. George's Church in Edinburgh, Scotland, where he had been parish minister since 1814. No one knew it, but that day, April 11, 1830, he would give one of his last messages. He died suddenly a few months later at age 52. It was said, "When he was taken at an early age, the whole country wept."

Dr. Thomson titled his sermon "The Christian's Choice." His text was Joshua's message to Israel, just before *he* died. His audience was mostly Christians who were "kind and faithful...just and honorable." But, he warned, this was not enough. Good deeds were not "evidence that you are serving the Lord."

He reminded them "the service of God is exclusive. It does not admit interference, competition, or divided homage. It deserves—it demands—and must have—the whole man." We can't commit *some* parts to Him. He must be "Lord over all," and He requires our "whole heart."

Like Joshua, Thomson stressed the need to decide *today*. He argued that delaying a decision "will be the means of rendering it more difficult in the end." Bad habits would become more ingrained. It would be harder to change.

The choices Andrew Thomson emphasized are the same choices we face as individuals and nations. How are you responding? Is Jesus *your* Lord and Master? Decide today to submit your life to Him without conditions.

How are you serving the Lord today?

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*Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*

Joshua 24:15 NASB

### PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, I surrender my life to You. You are my Lord. Use me to impact lives for the Gospel. In Your name, amen.

*We preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness.*

1 Corinthians 1:23 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your calling. I seek Your strength, favor, and anointing. May others come to know Jesus through my life. In His name, amen.

Evaluate your passion for the Lord and spiritual ideas currently.

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## Preaching Christ

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 1

Although born in Delaware in colonial America, Samuel Davies retained the flavor of his family's Welsh background. One commentator observed that as a pastor and evangelist, he delivered sermons "with all the pathos of his Welsh soul."

From his youth, he sensed God's call on his life. He owed much of that sense to the faith of his parents. He once said, "I am a son of prayer, like my namesake Samuel. My mother called me Samuel because, she said, I have asked him of the Lord."

Davies impacted thousands of people, including Patrick Henry, who played a key role during the American Revolution. As a boy, Henry often heard Davies preach and acknowledged his influence. In addition, pastors throughout the world studied his sermons, published in the United States and England.

Frequently sick, he might have been tempted to cut back his efforts. But Davies would let nothing deter him from preaching. He found strength in being faithful to his call. He once wrote, "In my sickness, I found the unspeakable importance of a Mediator in a religion for sinners." He found all his sufficiency in Christ! What was his message? "It is Jesus whom I preach." He is "an all-sufficient Savior. None but Christ, none but Christ!"

The world needs people with this relentless passion for the Gospel, who focus on serving Christ and making Him known. Dedicate *your* life to God and His Kingdom.

## Repentance

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EZEKIEL 14

Tensions were high throughout the American colonies. War loomed on the horizon, and many were afraid. Conflicts had arisen between British and French forces, and violence had developed into what became known as the French and Indian War. Samuel Davies, who was born on this day in 1723, lived among the colonists as a pastor and evangelist. In 1756 as the colonies faced serious problems, a special fast was called.

Davies reminded people that their only hope was to turn to God. He said, "National judgments are inflicted for national sins, and therefore reformation from national sins is the only hopeful way to escape them." What was the answer? "Pray frequently; pray fervently!"

Davies had previously expressed his thoughts about the importance of humility and repentance in a hymn called "While O'er Our Guilty Land, O Lord." There was sin in the land, and they faced mighty problems. The answer was to call on God: "Before Thy throne of grace we fall."

Davies knew the importance of true humility. He wrote, "See, we repent, we weep, we mourn; to our forsaken God we turn." The country's only hope was to turn to God: "Oh, spare our guilty country, spare the church which Thou hast planted there."

Today, our world urgently needs revival. Pray. Seek God. Humble yourself before Him. Ask for a revival in your life. And cry out for His mercy on your country and the world.

Compose a prayer of repentance.

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*Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.*

Ezekiel 14:6 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, forgive our nation for our sins. I cry out for Your mercy. Send Your Spirit. May Your glory dwell in our land. In Jesus' name, amen.

*You were once darkness,  
but now you are light  
in the Lord; walk as  
children of light.*

Ephesians 5:8 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, I humble myself before You. I offer myself as a living sacrifice. Use me to bring revival and further Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Draft a prayer for revival in our nation.

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## Your Responsibility

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: EPHESIANS 5

“Whatever be your place...cherish a public spirit. Serve your generation.” Samuel Davies, the fourth president of Princeton University, delivered this charge to the 11 members of that school's class of 1760. He spoke not merely as an educator, but as a passionate Christian. Called the Apostle of Virginia, he had spent years as a pastor and evangelist.

His example and encouragement set a standard those students followed throughout their lives. One became a member of the Continental Congress. Two became chaplains in the Continental Army. Two became judges. One founded a college. One was a member of the United States House of Representatives. Another signed the American Declaration of Independence.

Davies understood that Christians need to make it their primary goal to please God and proclaim salvation. But he knew that Christians have a responsibility to be involved in the world as well.

We are to pray for all those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2) and be good citizens (Titus 3:1). We should be the “*salt of the earth*,” and “*the light of the world*,” shining brightly that others “*may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:13-16).

Today, the world needs Christians who are the salt of the earth, who are examples of integrity and honesty, and who show compassion and concern. Be ready to stand up for your faith. Pray. Vote. As God leads you, get involved!

## Your Calling

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 1

God made it clear that He was giving Jeremiah a ministry He had designed. The messages he delivered were not matters of opinion or preference. He simply was God's messenger. God shaped his personality, gave him the words to speak, and told him when and where to speak.

This focus and dedication are different from the way many people approach their careers. Biographies from all generations reveal that a typical path starts with personal interests and beliefs and continues with goals and desires.

Throughout his ministry, Jeremiah was accused of having personal motivations. He was criticized for opinions contrary to what seemed popular and for advocating actions that did not seem beneficial to the Jews.

But Jeremiah knew that he was being God's messenger; his personal opinions did not matter. His mission was to speak the words that God gave him, *regardless* of his feelings, the circumstances he faced, or the opinions of other people. His task was to be sensitive to God, to obey His call, to declare His message, and to trust the results to Him.

Seek to be faithful to the ministry God has given *you* in your life, no matter what others say. Be a faithful steward of the resources you have been given. Faithfully complete every assignment. Seek to be sensitive to His Spirit, do His will, and speak His messages. Strive to live for Him in all that you do.

What ministry has God given you in this season of life?

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*Before I formed you in  
the womb I knew you,  
and before you were  
born I consecrated  
you; I appointed you a  
prophet to the nations.  
[...] Behold, I have  
put my words in your  
mouth.*

Jeremiah 1:5, 9 ESV

**PRAYER:**

Father, I commit my time, talents, and resources to You. Help me fulfill the assignments You have given me. In Jesus' name, amen.

*“Ah, LORD God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” But the LORD said to me, “To all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.”*

Jeremiah 1:6–7 ESV

**PRAYER:**

Father, help me to be a faithful servant. Thank You for providing all that I need. I trust in You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What has God told you to do that you are reluctant to start?

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## Change Your Attitude

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 1

Over and over, Jeremiah faced situations that he did not desire or seek. God called him to deliver His messages that he knew would be unpopular and did not necessarily reflect his personal views. Even before speaking, he knew he would be criticized. We sense his reluctance and lack of enthusiasm for many assignments.

But God had given him the attitude he was to embrace. He might have felt unqualified for some assignments. He might have felt he was the wrong person, and others could do the job better. God simply told Jeremiah that he had the wrong focus.

Instead of looking at his personal experiences, desires, and abilities, he was to focus on God. Everywhere he went, Jeremiah was His representative. His only challenge was to hear God clearly and do the things He called him to do. His only job was to deliver the messages God asked him to deliver and to remain faithful to his assignments.

In many ways, we might feel the same way—perhaps reluctant, unqualified, and overwhelmed by our challenges and the size of our opposition. We may not know what to do. We are aware of our weaknesses, sometimes too aware. This is why we need to stay sensitive to God and be in tune with His Spirit so that we can be bold to fulfill every assignment He gives and always trust completely in Him.

## Roaming

TODAY’S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 2

The Bible reminds us that God gives us freedom to make choices. But He also wants us to realize we are *responsible* for our actions, and we can expect *consequences* for the choices we make.

As Jeremiah describes, God watches the way we live. He sees the inevitable failure of some decisions and how frequently people seem willing to turn their backs on the truths He has revealed and the principles that can lead to success.

As we make decisions, we can be influenced by people in this world who can make their ways seem desirable. We can feel compelled to follow them, even if this means ignoring or rejecting the things of God and roaming from the sure foundation He has given us.

When faced with these kinds of temptations, we need to consider what God has done for us and remember that His Word has passed the test of time.

We need to ask ourselves some important questions. Are we sure that we want to ignore God? What has happened in the past to those who ignored His promises and violated His Word? In contrast, what has happened to those who kept His Word and applied His principles? Why would we follow paths that conflict with His will?

Ask God to help you stay true to Him and avoid the tendency to roam. Remember the principles in His Word and apply them in your life.

Who or what do you allow to influence your decisions?

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*Why do My people say, “We are free to roam”?*

Jeremiah 2:31 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, help me stay anchored in Your Word. Keep me from straying away from the truth. I trust in You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

*Faithless Israel has proved herself to be more righteous than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, "Return, faithless Israel," declares the LORD.*

Jeremiah 3:11–12 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, thank You for being gracious. Forgive the sins of our nation. Thank You for Your mercy. Help us return to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a prayer of repentance on behalf of our nation.

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# Return

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 3

Israel had been "faithless." They had "perverted their way" and "forgotten the LORD their God" (v. 21). As a result, they experienced countless problems. But God was eager to change their circumstances and bless them. He was "gracious" and did not look upon them in anger (v. 12).

He promised to give them leaders who would lead them in the right ways. There would be abundance. They would "no longer follow the stubbornness of their evil heart" (v. 17) They would realize that He had given them "a pleasant land, the most beautiful inheritance" (v. 19).

What would it take for these promises to be fulfilled? It *started* with repentance when they humbled themselves before Him and confessed their sins. Seven times in this chapter, God repeated their need to "return" (a word used more than 90 times in Jeremiah).

If they returned, they would call Him "Father" (v. 19) and not turn away. He would heal their faithlessness. They would realize they had followed wrong paths and wrong leaders, and they could find salvation only in Him.

How easily we can be like Israel, walking on wrong paths, being faithless and disobedient, going our own way, and forgetting God. He stands before us beckoning us to return to Him.

Make sure to stay humble before God. Confess your sins. Seek *first* His Kingdom and His wisdom. Turn aside from worldly ideas and dedicate your life to serving Him.

# Your Unplowed Ground

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 4

The people of Judah had drifted away from God and embraced idolatry. They had chosen to walk in evil ways. How were they to respond? He told them to "break up your uncultivated ground."

This ground symbolized things in their lives that were fruitless where nothing productive was growing. They had sown seeds but sown in the wrong places—"among thorns." These "thorns" were thoughts, activities, and actions that choked the life out of the seeds and prevented them from developing and bearing fruit.

God's promises were still true. However, the presence of thorns prevented the full development of these seeds. By sowing in "uncultivated ground," the seeds simply would not grow.

The fact is that God has given each of us many kinds of seeds—our time, talents, and treasures. Just as the farmer reaps a harvest by sowing his seeds, we reap a harvest by sowing our seeds. But our lives can be robbed of God's blessings if we have unplowed ground or if we sow our seeds in the wrong places.

Today, think about where you are sowing *your* seeds. Where are you investing your time, energy, and resources? Are you spending time with the wrong people or pursuing the wrong goals?

Ask God to help you break up *your* unplowed ground. Humble yourself before Him. Repent of any sin. Invest your resources and energies in activities that will bear fruit for His Kingdom.

Where are you planting the seeds God has given you?

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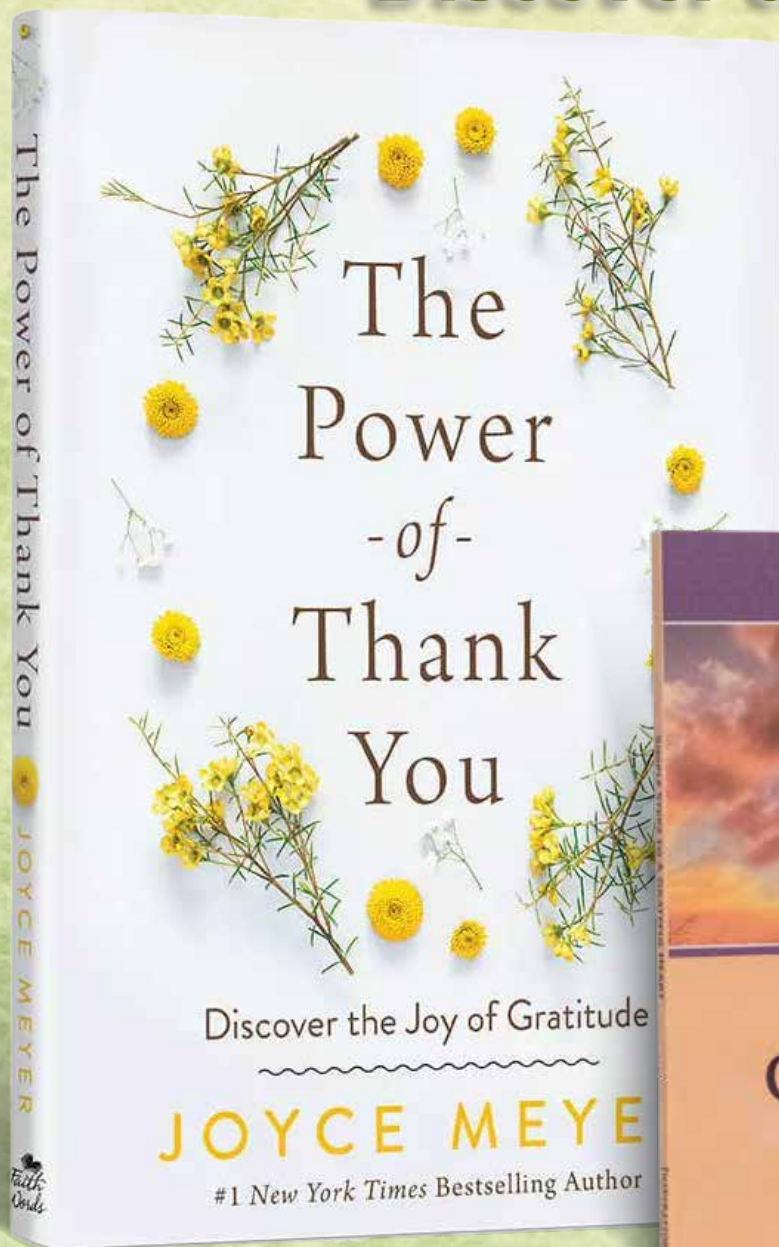
*Break up your uncultivated ground, and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD and remove the foreskins of your heart.*

Jeremiah 4:3–4 NASB

**PRAYER:**

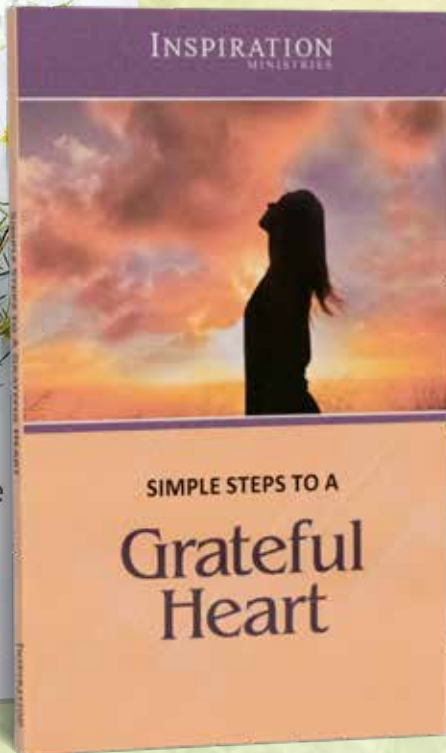
Father, thank You for all You have given me. I have been blessed to bless others. Use me to impact lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

# Discover the Power of Thank You!



While life is not always fair, you can choose to have a thankful attitude and live each moment full of joy, simply because God is good. Best-selling author **Joyce Meyer** believes having a heart of gratitude for who God is and what He has done will help you fully realize how He's working in your life, lifting your burdens, and showing you everything in a brighter light.

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*They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to return... They are foolish; for they do not know the way of the LORD.*

Jeremiah 5:3–4 NKJV

### PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. Teach me. Guide me. Shape my life according to Your will. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on your struggles with pride.

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## Fixed and Defiant

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 5

How natural it is to want our way—to make decisions that make sense to us, to make up our minds. Even long-time believers can find it difficult in practical ways *simply* to trust God.

But the Bible continually reminds us that God knows what is best for each person. We should not *“lean on our own understanding,”* but we must acknowledge Him and let Him direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5–6). Yet this can be so *hard* to do.

As our Creator, He understands us better than we understand ourselves. He knows paths that might make sense to us may take us in the wrong direction.

Yet, when faced with choices, some people become determined not to listen to Him. They become so resolute that they make *“their faces harder than rock.”* They are defiant, fixed, and stubborn.

In contrast, God encourages us to stay humble before Him, to have hearts able to learn from experiences, to be teachable, and to be ready to admit our mistakes and turn to Him.

Ask God to show you if you are guilty of pride. Don't stubbornly continue to seek your own way. Humble yourself before Him. Lay aside your personal feelings and surrender your life anew to His leading. Trust Him, and let Him direct your path. Seek to be pliable and sensitive to His Spirit. Be willing to learn and always ready to turn to Him.

## Biases

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 5

At first, Jeremiah thought that the problem was with the common people (*“the poor”*). He had delivered God's warnings to them, but they had not responded. Perhaps, he wondered, they just didn't know enough about God and His Word. Perhaps they did not have the necessary background or education.

Jeremiah concluded that the response would be different if he spoke to the elite people of the society instead: leaders and scholars, those who were highly educated. The people who, he might have thought, were more intelligent and receptive to messages from God.

But Jeremiah was wrong. He discovered that his biases were wrong. Regardless of their backgrounds, all the people responded in the same way: no one received the word of the Lord.

We all can be like Jeremiah, jumping to conclusions based on appearances. We tend to make assumptions based on what seems to be true from our subjective perspectives. Jeremiah learned that people could reject (or accept) God no matter their station in life.

Remember that God has a completely different perspective. As He told the prophet Samuel, *“The LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart”* (1 Samuel 16:7 NKJV).

Be careful before forming opinions of others just because of their circumstances. Ask God for discernment. Seek His wisdom. Always remember that He sees things differently than you do.

What happens when you make snap judgments?

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*They are just the poor... they don't understand the way of the LORD... I will go to the powerful and speak to them. Surely they know the way of the LORD... However, these also had broken the yoke and torn off the chains.*

Jeremiah 5:4–6 CSB

### PRAYER:

Father, help me to see others the way You see them. Give me discernment. Use me to minister to those in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.



*An appalling and horrible thing has happened...prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it this way! But what will you do when the end comes?*

Jeremiah 5:30–31 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I surrender my life to You. I seek first Your Kingdom. I commit my time, talents, and treasures to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Are you placing a higher emphasis on your interests or on serving God?

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## The Ultimate Destiny

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 5

The land was filled with false prophets, men inspired not by God but by their thoughts and desires. Even priests ruled *“on their own authority.”* They did not submit to God or seek His will. Instead, they focused on their *personal* interests.

What made matters worse was that God's people loved the actions of these priests and prophets! To God, this was *“an appalling and horrible thing.”* These religious leaders might have enjoyed exercising their power, but eventually, they would realize their own pleasures would not last into eternity.

God asked them, *“What will you do when the end comes?”* They failed to realize that the day was coming when their pleasures, power, and even their lives would end. They would look back and see clearly how they had served themselves but forgotten about God. They would see how they had done things that brought them immediate benefit, but for which they would pay the consequences in eternity.

You have the opportunity to learn from these men and their short-term perspectives. Are you just living for today, or are you remembering the eternal consequences of your actions? Are you placing a higher emphasis on your interests and desires or on serving God?

Remember, one day you will face God and give an account of your life. *“What will you do when the end comes?”*

## False Promises

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 6

People were worried and afraid. There were threats from powerful neighbors, family and economic problems, and widespread immorality. The country was hungry for answers and peace.

In this environment, some spoke up promising hope. To a troubled nation urgently needing peace, these people promised peace.

But in reality, *nothing* changed. Their promises proved to be empty. Their claims were false. Their solutions did not work. The treatments they recommended were just *“superficial,”* not making any substantive changes. As a result, discouraged people became even more discouraged.

What was particularly noticeable was that the people making promises were filled with covetousness. They were most concerned about themselves and doing what was best for themselves. And they were not sorry for mistakes they had made: *“They don't even know how to blush”* (v. 15).

How did God respond? He asked them to put aside their selfish desires, to stop walking on the road they wanted. Then they were to return to His ways. *“Ask for the old, godly way, and walk in it”* (v. 16).

The Bible reminds us that God is ready to give us His peace, bless us, meet our needs, and take away our fears and burdens. We simply need to turn to Him, do things His way, apply His principles, repent of our sins, and humble ourselves before Him. We can be confident then that we *“will find rest for [y]our souls”* (v. 16).

Write a prayer asking God to help you walk in His ways today.

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*They offer superficial treatments for my people's mortal wound. They give assurances of peace when there is no peace.*

Jeremiah 6:14 NLT

### PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. I look to You for the answers I need. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*This is what the LORD says: "I will put obstacles in my people's path. Fathers and sons will both fall over them."*

Jeremiah 6:21 NLT

**PRAYER:**

Father, help me be sensitive to Your Spirit. Help me to listen when You are trying to get my attention. In Jesus' name, amen.

What obstacles has God placed in your way recently?

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## Obstacles

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 6

God wanted the best for His people. He taught them His ways and gave them His Word. He sent prophets and priests to guide them. He provided for them. He delivered them and protected them. He even warned them when they made mistakes and bad decisions.

When trouble was ahead, He sent guards to alert them, crying, "Listen for the sound of the alarm" (v. 17). In spite of these warnings, they refused to listen and continued to reject His Word. They might have been intentionally defiant, or they might not have realized the mistakes they were making.

Yet He continued to reach out to them, hoping they would change and listen. One way He warned them was by putting "obstacles" in their paths. These could have been people or events, various things that might have interrupted their activities and forced them to stop and think. In Jeremiah's time, nothing seemed to work. Sadly, God's people continued to ignore His warnings. They continued to make mistakes and go in the wrong direction.

God has used this same pattern with people in other times. He continues to use this pattern today. We may experience unexpected delays. We might be interrupted. Our paths may be blocked.

We need to turn to God to see if He is trying to get our attention in these moments. We need to pray and seek His face.

## Empty Words

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 7

As He looked at His people, God could see that many of them were ignoring His Word, acting in ways that were displeasing to Him. Yet they deceived themselves and became convinced they were right and didn't need to make any changes.

But God sent Jeremiah to warn them and correct their false assumptions. He communicated emphatically that they needed to "amend [their] ways and [their] deeds."

Some simply refused to listen to His messages. In fact, they didn't feel that they needed to change at all. They thought they just needed to say that the building before them was the Lord's temple (as if that absolved them of any guilt). God felt that they were missing the point.

How easy it can be for us to make the same kinds of assumptions as if we can make things different just through good intentions, empty words, and our own justifications.

The Bible consistently shows us that God looks for hearts that truly are sensitive to His Spirit. He looks for people who demonstrate their commitment by the words they speak and the things they do, people who recognize when they have sinned and are ready to ask for forgiveness.

If we desire to make a real and lasting impact, God tells us we need to turn away from sin, seek Him, be sensitive to His leading, and apply the principles in His Word.

What is God's Spirit telling your heart today?

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*Do not trust in these deceptive words...truly amend your ways and your deeds...Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail.*

Jeremiah 7:4-8 ESV

**PRAYER:**

Father, cleanse me of my sins. Help me to live in a way that pleases You. I desire to do Your will. In Jesus' name, amen.

*They did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward.*

Jeremiah 7:24 NKJV

**PRAYER:**

Father, help me incline my ear to You and seek Your will. I want to go forward and follow Your plan for my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

What is currently distracting you from seeking God's Kingdom?

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## Going Backward?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 7

Turning our backs on God happens in so many subtle ways. Feeling the pull of things of this world, we can find ourselves *drifting* away from Him.

The Bible teaches that He wants to see our faces and make sure that we are looking to Him and going forward, not backward. Going backward symbolically indicates that we are not facing God or the truth. This means that we are going in the wrong direction (and may not even know it). We go backward when we walk *"in the counsels and the dictates of [our] evil hearts."* This happens when we fill our minds with the things of this world.

How easy it can be to form our opinions based on the content of the media, to become addicted to opinions expressed in social media, to pay attention to gossip, and to seek out advice from people not committed to God.

We need to realize that God has a plan for our lives. He wants us to let Him direct our path. He wants us to seek first His Kingdom, to fill our minds and hearts with His Word, and to spend time with Him in prayer. These actions help us go *forward*.

Incline your ears to God. Don't hide or run away, but focus on Him. Don't allow anything to distract you. Seek to go forward and follow His plan for you.

## Shepherding Skills

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 10

What does it take to be a good leader? Many would say that key characteristics include intelligence, experience, being articulate, understanding the times, being in tune with people, and having ideas that promise success.

Over time, many men and women have displayed these characteristics only to find that they are not enough. What is *most* important? Acting with God's wisdom, being sensitive to His will, being led by His Spirit, and knowing His Word.

The prophet Jeremiah lived at a time when many leaders had the right background and skills. They had been able to gain and keep power. On the surface, they were good leaders. But they failed in the most critical area: They had *"not sought the LORD."* Lacking His wisdom and insight, they had *"become stupid."*

What about leaders in our time? What kind of shepherds are we depending on to lead our flocks, our churches, businesses, cities, states, and nations?

These questions also apply to each of us as individuals. As we face the issues of life, it is important to have experience and intelligence. But what is most important is having God's wisdom and blessing. We need to be people of prayer who listen to Him, have experience being led by Him, and be in tune with His Spirit. We need to know His Word and be committed to seek first His Kingdom and trust in Him.

Compose a prayer asking for God's specific guidance and wisdom.

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*The shepherds have become stupid and have not sought the LORD; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered.*

Jeremiah 10:21 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, I commit these issues to You: \_\_\_\_\_. I seek Your wisdom and guidance. Speak to me. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Your gods are as many as your cities, Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to the shameful thing, altars to burn incense to Baal.*

Jeremiah 11:13 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, open my eyes to see whether I might be guilty of reinterpreting Your Word. Jesus is my Lord. I submit my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

What happens when you try to reinterpret God's Word?

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## Personal Gods

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 11

By the time of Jeremiah, many of God's people had forgotten His first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3). How had they done this?

His Word no longer was absolute but had been modified and *reinterpreted* to suit their own purposes. They were not content to serve God but followed *personal* gods designed to conform to their own ideas and desires. They did not even feel they were doing anything wrong.

They had remade God into their own image and adapted Him to fit their interests and what made sense to them. They were not worshiping at His designated altar in Jerusalem but at places set up for their convenience.

All of us can find ourselves guilty of reinterpreting God's commands, justifying our own opinions, and ignoring His Word. This is why we need to know the Word and stay sensitive to His Spirit, so we are ready to let Him warn, correct, and teach us.

We need to submit our thoughts, actions, and beliefs to Him. We need to spend time in prayer, allowing Him to review our lives, guide our decisions, and check our motivations.

Today, give God permission to search your heart and mind. Submit your life for His review. Ask Him to free you from subjective opinions and help you recognize when you might just be *reinterpreting* His Word incorrectly. Determine to live in ways that are pleasing to Him.

## Bearing Burdens

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 14

Jeremiah personally had not committed the sins that led to Judah's troubles. God was not angry with him, so he might have felt that the people were getting what they deserved. Instead, he had *compassion* for them.

He felt the hurt and pain experienced throughout the nation. He even took on himself the sins of his people and pleaded their case before God.

When he prayed, he spoke in the first person: "Why have You stricken us so that there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, but there was no good; and for the time of healing, and there was trouble" (v. 19). Some people may not have repented, but Jeremiah confessed on their behalf and pleaded for God's forgiveness.

Jeremiah's actions remind us that Jesus cared so much for sinners that He did not just pray for them; He died on the cross for them, taking upon Himself the sins of the world. He even prayed for those who were crucifying Him, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Today, ask God to give you a burden for souls and to help you be sensitive to the needs of people all around you. Remember to "*bear one another's burdens*" (Galatians 6:2). Seek to be a person of compassion. Pray for those with needs. And give of your resources that more souls may find Jesus.

Compose a prayer asking God to fill your heart with compassion.

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*Have You utterly rejected Judah?... We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness and the iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against You... Do not break Your covenant with us... We will wait for You.*

Jeremiah 14:19–22 NKJV

### PRAYER:

Father, give me compassion for the lost. Fill me with Your love. Forgive our nation of our sins. Be merciful to us. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Go and buy a potter's earthenware jar... Go out to the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the entrance of the Potsherd Gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you.*

Jeremiah 19:1-2 NASB

## Right Time and Place

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 19

God's directions to Jeremiah often were *specific*: what to say, to whom, and even *where* to stand. For example, one day God gave him a message for some elders and priests to deliver by "the entrance of the Potsherd Gate" in a valley outside Jerusalem. God had a reason for this direction. He knew *specific* people would be at this place at this *specific* time.

The location also had special meaning. God was warning that He was about to "bring a disaster upon this place" (v. 3) because of the disobedience of the people. "This place" was called "the Valley of Slaughter" (v. 6). God would "frustrate the planning of Judah and Jerusalem in this place" (v. 7). He needed Jeremiah to be in that specific place at that specific time. Since Jeremiah was sensitive to God's call, he obeyed.

We need to remember that God is a God of purpose, plans, and places. At times, He speaks words that apply in all situations and to all people. At other times, He speaks words meant for specific times, places, and audiences.

Seek to be sensitive to God's Word and its applications. Remember that He has a special assignment just for you. He might call you to do specific tasks at specific places and times. When He calls, be sure to obey, speak His words, and do what He asks you to do.

### PRAYER:

Father, I will go where You want me to and do what You want me to do. I commit my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Journal about a time when God gave you specific directions.

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## False Expectations

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 21

King Zedekiah realized he needed a miracle, or Babylon would defeat Judah. He sent messengers to ask Jeremiah to approach God, hoping He would help them. But God gave an answer the king did not expect. Instead of performing a miracle to save them, God said He would deliver them *into* the hands of the Babylonians.

They simply were reaping what they had sown. Zedekiah did not seem to realize that God was aware of his conduct. Although living in sin, he still felt his actions would not matter, and God would bless and protect him.

Many people are like Zedekiah. They believe they can live in any way they want. Then when facing a problem, they expect that God will perform miracles to help them.

But God is not a fool. He promises that there are *consequences* for our actions and that we will reap *whatever* we sow (Galatians 6:7).

The Bible reminds us that God wants us to be like Jeremiah, seeking to obey Him, listening to Him, developing a close personal relationship with Him, filling our lives with His Word, being sensitive to His will, and having a clean heart.

Do not wait for a crisis to turn to God. Determine to invest your time, talents, and treasures in your relationship with Him now. Seek first His Kingdom. Seek Him with your whole heart, and commit your life to Him.

Are you prepared to reap the consequences of your recent actions?

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*They begged Jeremiah, "Please ask the LORD to help us... Perhaps the LORD will be gracious and do a mighty miracle as he has done in the past."*

Jeremiah 21:1-2 NLT

### PRAYER:

Father, I surrender my life to You. Help me know You more intimately. Cleanse my heart of sin, and help me please You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the LORD'S house.*

Jeremiah 28:2-3 ESV

**PRAYER:**

Father, give me discernment. Help me know what to believe. I seek to walk in Your ways. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Whom Do You Believe?

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 28

Hananiah was known as a prophet. He delivered a prophecy that *sounded* authentic. It was a message consistent with the hopes of the people, one they *wanted* to be true.

The problem was that this message did not come from God. The only person who seemed aware of this deception was Jeremiah. He declared that God had not given Hananiah these messages. Everyone would know the truth when his words were not fulfilled.

Responding to Jeremiah's accusations, Hananiah continued to act in ways consistent with those of a prophet. Other people seemed convinced, but Jeremiah knew better.

Later, God told Jeremiah to tell Hananiah that he had *mised* the people. The message was clear: *"The LORD has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie."* God declared that he would die because he had *"uttered rebellion against the LORD"* (v. 15-16). When he died as prophesied, Hananiah proved to be a fraud. Jeremiah's words proved true.

This clash illustrates a common problem. How do we *really* discern the difference between genuine and false? Many people claim to know the truth. Politicians powerfully declare their convictions. Entertainers try to shape our morals. Society tries to persuade us that their ways are right. But these people are often fake.

Ask God for discernment so that you might know the truth. Pray and seek His wisdom. Study His Word, so you can know His standards.

Compose a prayer asking God for discernment for a particular issue.

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## Unsearchable

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 33

King Zedekiah did not hesitate to demonstrate his power. To him, his requests seemed logical. He hoped that Jeremiah would use his position as prophet to assure that God would deliver His people from Babylon. Instead, Jeremiah prophesied that God would deliver Jerusalem into Babylon's hands.

The king reacted by putting Jeremiah in prison, a place where he seemed completely isolated, vulnerable, and powerless. In contrast, Zedekiah retained his power. No one could challenge him as king.

But while Jeremiah was in prison, the word of the Lord came to him. God reminded Jeremiah that He is greater than Zedekiah and any other king or kingdom. Jeremiah might be in a man-made prison, but that did not limit God in any way.

From prison, Jeremiah called to God, and He revealed the kinds of insights that He had promised—*amazing* things, things that no human could have imagined! Remember that God can speak to you at any place and any time. You may feel bound by problems or circumstances. You may feel inadequate or overwhelmed. But always remember that God has *no limits*.

In every situation, call to Him, confident that He can teach you new things and change your life in *extraordinary* ways. When you face impossible situations, do not give in to despair or hopelessness. Instead, call to God. Be prepared to receive unexpected answers and insights that might seem *"incomprehensible."*

What confusing subject do you need to ask God to make clear?

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*Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and incomprehensible things you do not know.*

Jeremiah 33:3 ESV

**PRAYER:**

Father, open my mind to understand more of Your truth. Teach me. I seek Your wisdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

*They shall praise His name with dancing; they shall sing praises to Him with tambourine and lyre.*

Psalms 149:3 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, I rejoice in all that You have done for me. I praise and worship You. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Overflowing Response

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 149

We respond to God's presence in many ways. We act in many ways as we think about all that He has done for us and all we owe to Him.

Many people stay aloof and bottle up their feelings or are concerned about how others might react and are reluctant to show their emotions. But some people have hearts filled with gratitude and are willing to express these feelings in praise, words, and music.

The psalmist indicates that thoughts of God can inspire dancing. This is the response of souls who truly are moved by God. They feel the pulse coursing throughout their being, so moved that they cannot sit still.

These are expressions of complete surrender by those overwhelmed by His presence, men and women who sense His presence in amazing ways. People who realize all that He has done for them are unable to contain their joy and excitement. This is how David responded as the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem. He just could not contain himself and expressed his joy by *"leaping and dancing before the LORD"* (2 Samuel 6:16).

Think about the many things God has done for you—the joy of salvation, peace, blessings, answers to prayer, protection, forgiveness, freedom, and more.

Do not be shy about expressing what all this means to you. Do not be inhibited by what others may think. Be ready to sing, raise your hands, and dance before the Lord!

How do you express your praise and gratitude to the Lord?

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## Praise!

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 150

Hildegard of Bingen was a talented poet and composer, writing music still performed today. Born to noble parents in 1098 in present-day Germany, she developed a deep, personal relationship with God and dedicated her life to serving Him.

Even as a child, she was known to have received visions whose messages were confirmed when submitted to spiritual authorities. In one of her visions, she recorded receiving insights about the importance of praise specifically associated with Psalm 150.

Describing her insights, she wrote, "In these words, we are instructed about the interior life through exterior things." Instead of bottling up our thoughts and feelings, we should "direct them as much as possible toward the praises of the Creator," both in instrumental music and music with words.

She wrote, "Consider carefully that just as the body of Christ was born of the Holy Spirit...just so is the song of praise according to the heavenly music radiated by the Holy Spirit in the church." She encouraged people to remember that "the body is truly the garment of the soul, which has a living voice." It is fitting for our souls constantly "to sing praises to God through the voice."

Praise is central to the life of every believer. The Bible commands us to praise the Lord. Join David and the angelic hosts to praise His name. Lift your voice and give thanks. He is worthy!

Compose your own psalm of praise to God for His goodness to you.

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*Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary. [...] Everything that has breath shall praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!*

Psalms 150:1, 6 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Lord, I praise Your name. Thank You for all that You have done for me. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*I will build My church,  
and the gates of hell  
shall not prevail against  
it.*

Matthew 16:18 ESV

### PRAYER:

Father, help me to place my hope and trust in Your unshakable Word. I depend upon You. I seek first Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you keep the Kingdom of God at the forefront of your mind?

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## Kingdoms of this World

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 16

Arthur Coxe was the son of a well-known minister. Born in New Jersey in 1818, he went on to become an important pastor, church leader, and composer of many hymns.

One of his most memorable compositions describes his insights into the nature of the kingdoms of this world. Written in 1839, "Oh, Where Are Kings and Empires Now?" urges worshipers to realize how *limited* human power is, how *little* we really understand, and how *quickly* the things of this world change.

Coxe asked, "Oh, where are kings and empires now of old, that went and came?" In contrast, God never changes. His Kingdom is always secure.

Churches may be attacked. Believers may make mistakes. Despite opposition, the church lasts throughout every storm and controversy: "Unshaken as eternal hills, immovable she stands, a mountain that shall fill the earth, a house not made by hands."

How easy it can be to focus on the kingdoms of this world and the things that seem important today. Coxe would urge us to remember that all these people and things are temporary.

As Paul reminds us, we should not look at the "*things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.*" Make sure that you focus on God's Kingdom. All the things we see around us are just temporary. In contrast, "*the things that are unseen are eternal*" (2 Corinthians 4:18). These are the things of God!

## Ten Thousand Times

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: REVELATION 5

As a child, Henry Alford demonstrated an unusual hunger to serve God. Born in London in 1810, by age six he had written a manuscript entitled "Travels of St. Paul." At the age of nine, he wrote a history of the Jews.

When he was sixteen, he wrote in his Bible that he solemnly dedicated his life to God and "to do His work as far as in me lies." This passion led to a life in which he served God in many ways, including being the dean of Canterbury Cathedral.

In 1867, he expressed his longing to spend eternity with Jesus in a hymn called, "Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand." He pictured myriads of angels and "the armies of the ransomed saints throng up the steep of light." When all would be finished, and our "fight with death and sin" would be over, "what rush of alleluias fills all the earth and sky! What ringing of a thousand harps bespeaks the triumph nigh!" What a day of joy!

Perhaps reflecting the fact that his mother died when he was a child, Alford knew that on *that* day orphans would no longer be fatherless, and widows would not be desolate. He longed for Jesus to come and reign.

Today, let your heart focus on praise and worship. Stop and thank God for His provisions, protection, and blessings! Rejoice! You will spend eternity with Him!

Which of God's blessings are you most thankful for today?

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*I heard the voices of  
many angels... "Worthy  
is the Lamb that was  
slaughtered to receive  
power, wealth, wisdom,  
might, honor, glory, and  
blessing."*

Revelation 5:11–12 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all that You have done for me. I rejoice in Your goodness. I join the angels in praising and worshiping You. In Jesus' name, amen.



*Let's come before His presence with a song of thanksgiving, let's shout joyfully to Him in songs.*

Psalms 95:2 NASB

## Thankful People

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PSALM 95

Henry Alford was a master of languages. Even as a child, he could repeat many phrases in Greek and Latin. As an adult, he became a poet, painter, musician, biblical scholar, and author. He served several churches in England before becoming dean of Canterbury Cathedral.

Despite these accomplishments, he never forgot the importance of having a thankful heart. He made it a habit at the end of the day to stand up and thank God for what he had received.

In 1844, he expressed this spirit of thankfulness in a hymn, "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come," which celebrated the goodness of God.

His cry was for all thankful people to come forward. Reflecting the end of the harvest, he wrote, "Raise the song of harvest home; all is safely gathered in, ere the winter storms begin. God our Maker doth provide for our wants to be supplied."

Alford knew that "all the world is God's own field." He is the "Lord of the harvest." Knowing that there are weeds in the world, he prayed that God's people would be wholesome and pure.

He also looked forward to the day when the Lord would come and "take His harvest home." He prayed, "Even so, Lord, quickly come...gather Thou Thy people in, free from sorrow, free from sin."

Pause and thank God for all He has done for you. Trust your life to Him. Worship Him!

What are you thankful for today?

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## We Plow the Fields

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 13

Matthias Claudius was the son of a Lutheran pastor. After studying theology, he turned his attention to law and languages. Born in 1740 in northern Germany, he loved to write, and in 1768, he joined the Hamburg News Agency, first as a writer, and then as an editor. He was so influential that he became known as the father of popular German journalism.

In 1782, he heard farmers singing a song that expressed their faith in God and thankfulness for His blessings. Claudius copied the words, which he developed into a hymn. In 1861, Jane Campbell translated the words into English with the title "We Plow the Fields."

These farmers realized that they could "plow the fields, and scatter the good seed," but they depended on God to feed and water the seed. Claudius, like these farmers, knew that "all good gifts around us are sent from Heaven above" and that God alone "is the Maker of all things."

We see His hand everywhere as "He paints the wayside flower" and "lights the evening star." We trust Him, for we are "His children," and "He gives our daily bread."

Particularly during harvest time, we can marvel at the ways He provides. We see that *everything* is from Him. Claudius prayed that we would offer Him what He most desires, "our humble, thankful hearts."

Think about all that God has done for you. Thank Him and show your gratitude by bringing Him your offerings.

Reflect on the seeds you've sown into good ground recently.

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*The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom.*

Matthew 13:38 ESV

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all You've done for me. I depend on You. I offer my time, talents, and treasures to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned...But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land gave heed to the words of the LORD which He spoke by the prophet Jeremiah.*

Jeremiah 37:1–2 NKJV

## Hearts Open to God

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JEREMIAH 37

As a king, Zedekiah lived in luxury and was accustomed to power. He *claimed* he wanted to hear from God, but when Jeremiah delivered His message, Zedekiah would not pay attention, preferring his own ideas.

Jeremiah, on the other hand, carefully listened to what God said. Regardless of the reactions of other people, he focused on obeying God and being faithful to his assignments. He was completely committed to serving Him.

Jeremiah could tell Zedekiah was headed in the wrong direction and even begged him, “Please, obey the voice of the LORD which I speak to you. So it shall be well with you, and your soul shall live” (Jeremiah 38:20). But the king would not change his ways.

Zedekiah must have known the kind of life Jeremiah had led—his dedication, his sincerity, and the fact that he did know and hear from God. But, like many people, Zedekiah did not have that same commitment to God or a willingness to change.

In the end, Jeremiah the prophet, not Zedekiah the king, was proven right. He knew God and received the rewards that can come only from Him.

Learn from this lesson. God calls us to serve and obey Him. People can be fickle. They can change their minds, applauding you one minute and condemning you the next. But God never changes. You can depend on Him and His messages.

### PRAYER:

Father, I want to serve you. Open my heart to hear from You, and cleanse me from sin and deceit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer dedicating your heart to hearing from God.

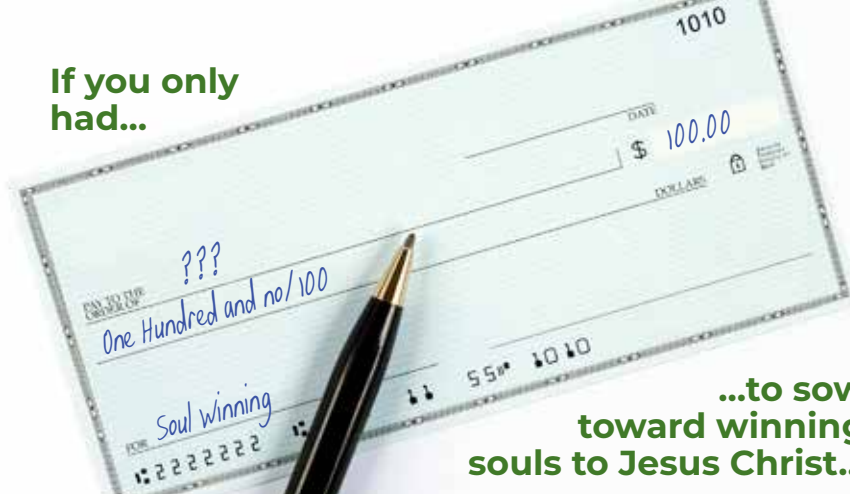
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If you only had...



...to sow  
toward winning  
souls to Jesus Christ...

## Where would YOU invest your money?

Consider these facts:

**Every SINGLE second...**Inspiration Ministries is able to share the Gospel of Jesus with someone, somewhere.

**Every SIX seconds...**someone prays the prayer of salvation, asking Jesus to forgive their sins and become their Lord and Savior.

**Every MONTH...**more than 400,000 people respond to the Gospel through our outreaches.

Inspiration Ministries is good ground for your seeds for souls. Already this year, more than **4.2 million souls** worldwide have said YES to Jesus through our ministry!

Sow your seed with the enclosed response form or by calling one of the numbers below. On **page 18**, you can see information on how to win even MORE souls by becoming an **Inspiration Ministries Monthly Partner**—a convenient way to help fulfill the Great Commission by *automatically* partnering with Inspiration Ministries each month.

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# TRUSTING THE God of Covenant

When our Father makes a promise,  
it's completely reliable.

The Bible teaches that our God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. Do you realize how astonishing that fact is?

The gods of the ancient world weren't that way at all. The mythical gods worshiped in the Greek and Roman world were deemed to be big and strong, but their characters mirrored all the same flaws humans have. They didn't make or keep promises to humankind, for they did whatever they pleased.

Likewise, the thousands of deities worshiped by followers of Hinduism and some other Eastern

religions didn't bother to make promises to humans or invite people into a personal relationship. They established precepts for how to live, but the only thing akin to a promise was the law of karma—warning people that they would endlessly be reincarnated to reap the consequences of their bad choices.

You see, if you or I were going to create our own gods, we would inevitably make them in our own image. Impulsive. Unreliable. Selfish. Dishonest. Never condescending to make promises to mere mortals.

Yet the God described throughout

the Bible is far different. When He makes a promise, it's completely reliable. As He revealed to the Israelites, “*Know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments*” (Deuteronomy 7:9 NKJV). Yes, He's “*the faithful God*”—the only faithful God! He's the God “*who keeps covenant,*” always true to His promises.

If you make an agreement or covenant with another person, they are likely to let you down from time to time. In contrast, the Bible declares the trustworthiness of the Lord: “*Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame*” (Romans 10:11 NASB). Praise God! In a world of turmoil and uncertainty, He remains “*Faithful and True*” (Revelation 19:11 NKJV).

Perhaps your heart was broken when a friend, spouse, child, or employer lied to you or failed to live up to their promises. But you never have to worry about that happening with God:

*God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?* (Numbers 23:19 NKJV).

We hope you've already come to know this great God. He loves you so much, and He's inviting you today to go deeper in your covenant relationship with Him. ❖

## Scriptures to meditate on this month:



### Week One

*Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.*

Genesis 9:11 NKJV



### Week Two

*Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.”*

Luke 22:20 NKJV



### Week Three

*You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men.*

2 Corinthians 3:2 NKJV



### Week Four

*But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.*

Hebrews 8:6 NKJV

# Do You Need a Breakthrough?

Our prayer ministers are here to agree in prayer with YOU...

Every day, our prayer ministers intercede for people with needs of every kind: marriage, kids, finances, salvation, addiction, depression, grief, illness...and the list goes on.

Praise God! Amazing things are happening! Here are just a few of the great testimonies from our partners who received a breakthrough in their circumstances when they prayed with our prayer ministers:

**Pain-free...**“I had been crippled with chronic, debilitating back pains due to arthritis. But after you prayed for my healing today, I’m walking pain free for the first time in three years!” — SHARRON, United Kingdom

**New job...**“Just one week after I sent you a prayer request that I would get a job, I received a call for an interview. I now have a job and am grateful for your prayers.”—BELINDA, Texas

**Off life support...**“My niece had spent 15 days on life support, and I decided to call the Inspiration Prayer Center the day before they turned off the machine and let her die. That same day she opened her eyes and started moving. Now she’s sitting up and talking!”—JOHN, Tennessee

**Let our prayer ministers pray for the breakthrough you need!**

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# A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. — Proverbs 17:22



Lord, make my words soft and tender, for tomorrow I may have to eat them.

Why does someone believe you when you say there are four billion stars but check when you say the paint is wet?

A positive attitude may not solve all your problems. But it will annoy enough people to make it worth the effort.



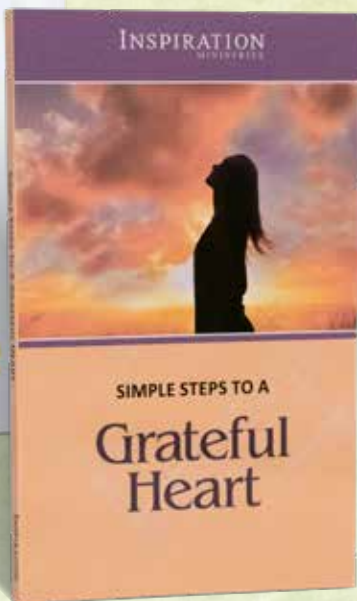
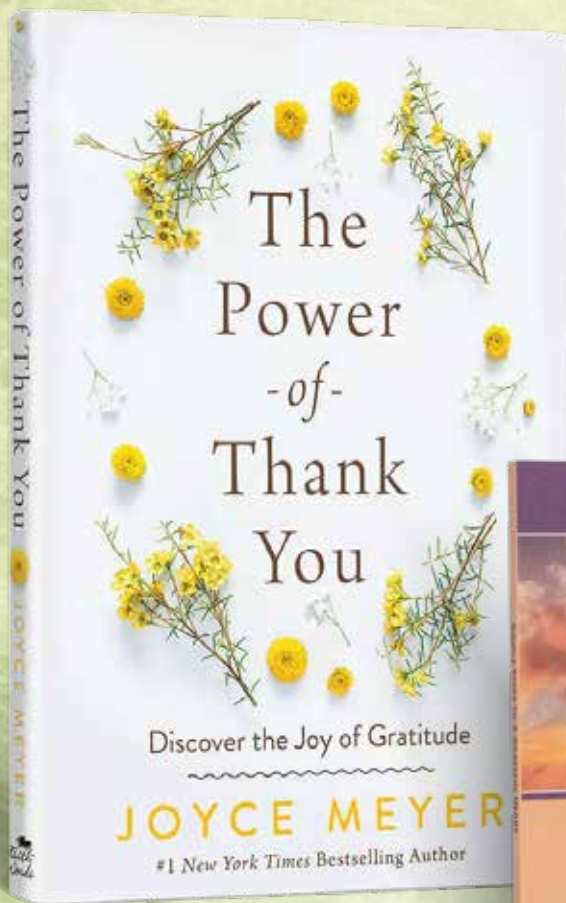
I read recipes the same way I read science fiction. I get to the end and think, “Well, that’s not going to happen.”

A man is lying on the operating table about to be operated on by his son, the surgeon. “Son, take good care of me,” the man said. “Remember...if anything happens to me, your mother is coming to live with you!”

Got some clean, Christian humor you'd like to share?  
Email it to: [MerryHeart@inspiration.org](mailto:MerryHeart@inspiration.org)

# The Greatness of Gratitude

Cultivate a lifestyle of thanksgiving with the help of this inspiring book and discover that no matter how messy life gets, God will make it beautiful. Filled with both uplifting encouragement and practical wisdom, you'll be equipped to live each day with the knowledge that God is working everything out for your good every single time.



## Plus, as a BONUS...

We also want to send you our book *Simple Steps to a Grateful Heart*. Learn how to activate your faith by entering a new season of thankfulness in Him.

See page 28 for details, and act quickly—supplies are limited!